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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the evolution of the Learning Games Libraries (LGLs), a collaborative approach between special education and public library staff to offer developmental learning materials to young handicapped children and their parents. LGLs began in the United States in 1935 and have spread to at least 23 countries, offering services to both handicapped and nonhandicapped children. Two models--the English and Swedish--are described. Benefits of games and toys for young children are noted. A pilot LGL project in Oak Park, Illinois is described from its inception in 1976 to its current efforts in assisting statewide LGLs. The paper concludes with information on the learning materials catalog listing approximately 300 materials. (CL)

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LEARNING GAMES LIBRARIES: HELP FOR THE AT-RISK CHILD -- A GROWING MOVEMENT IN ILLINOIS

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Presented at: National Early Childhood Conference on Children with Special Needs, Denver, Colorado, October 6-8, 1985.

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LEARNING GAMES LIBRARIES: HELP FOR THE AT-RISK CHILD -- A GROWING MOVEMENT IN ILLINOIS

Learning Games Libraries (LGLs) cross boundaries as efforts of special education and public library staff join to offer developmental learning materials to all children of a community but especially to the child with special needs. Paths are created for parent and child to learn together through play in the home -- with materials in greater number and variety than the parent could afford -- and in kinds of materials specifically selected for the needs of the special child.

LEARNING GAMES LIBRARIES AND THE LEARNING GAMES LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION -- WHAT THEY CAN DO FOR YOU

The Learning Games Libraries Association (LGLA) has evolved and developed over the past ten years in response to a need shared by parents of young special children, by teachers of special children and by communities wanting to serve these young children and their parents. This shared need was for appropriate developmental toys and learning materials for the young child who may be at-risk of having learning problems associated with physical, social, intellectual or other developmental delays. These learning materials have been collected and organized into libraries to make them and their uses available to parents wanting to help their youngsters in the very important business of play. The libraries have, in addition to manipulative play materials, an abundance of information about the appropriate use of learning games in the lives of young children. The LGLA can offer information in its new materials catalog which can help parents and teachers in wise selection of materials as well as in their use. If you are interested in establishing a Learning Games Library, you may wish to use the "Step-by-Step" booklet provided by LGLA, along

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with technical assistance from members of the group who are willing to share their expertise and experiences in maintaining a Learning Games Library.

A HISTORY OF GAME AND TOY LIBRARIES

LGLs, by definition, are for children and their parents, hence the logo, "parent and child together." A learning games library is a collection of developmental learning materials for children, selected especially for those who may have learning problems. Housed in a public library, materials may be borrowed by parents as may a book. While available to parents of all children, the materials are purchased primarily for those children who may have academic or physical handicapping conditions.

Prevention is another important aspect. Prior to school entry, many disabled children are not easily identified. The materials are available as intervention and possibly prevention of learning problems for these children.

Game and toy libraries are now available to persons living in many countries, in at least 23 I am told, including Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, France, Switzerland, Italy, Mauritius, Brazil and Zimbabwe. The programs in these countries and others are for both handicapped and non-handicapped children.

In an article by Kristen Juul, April 1984, this professor at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale who is noted for his knowledge of game and toy libraries world-wide, states that game and toy libraries are now receiving attention for the worthwhile services they offer and, there being an obvious need for these services, "There is little doubt that they shall grow in numbers and importance in the years ahead."

The earliest recorded toy library in the United States appears to have started in 1935 in Los Angeles, California. The first persons, however, who

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deserve credit for the movement can be traced to two women who persisted in their efforts to establish toy libraries: Jill Norris in England and Karen Stensland Junker in Sweden. Both are parents of handicapped children.

The Swedish model, often referred to as lekoteks, are specifically for handicapped children and have trained personnel advising parents through regularly scheduled sessions for a fee.

The English model was originally designed for the handicapped but has expanded to include nonhandicapped children, older handicapped people and the families of prisoners, of foster children and children with social and economic needs.

There are differences in the two models, each serving needs of handicapped children in a different way. When the LGL in Oak Park was started, we knew of neither the English nor the Swedish model, but established a lending system to satisfy the assessed needs of our communities. Our model is similar to the English model, offering free service and utilizing special education trained staff to guide parents in selection of materials.

GAMES/TOYS -- WHY THEY ARE GOOD FOR CHILDREN

Toys are an educational resource through which children can acquire certain learnings at the appropriate time in their development. A toy can be virtually anything a child plays with. For most children, creating play with varieties of objects comes naturally as does interaction with parents or other children. For the handicapped child, a deliberate modeling and patterning with the use of toys must occur before the child can enjoy the experience. Parents must be shown how to play with their child in a way which assists the child in skill development so basic to future learnings. Parent and child together must be taught by adults who have been trained in more than child development -- in special education for the young child.

Prior to enrollment in school, the parents may not be concerned because

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they may have no point of comparison with other children their child's age in an on-going way.

Prior to enrollment in school, a child reaches plateaus of learning. Educators now realize that, if a child does not acquire certain learnings at the appropriate time in his development, major difficulties may and often do result.

Prior to enrollment in school, early deviations in a child's development often go unheeded because they do not provide clear indications of a problem.

Prior to enrollment in school, the parents may be concerned about their child, but the pediatrician says "give the child time and the problem will go away." And sometimes it does. And sometimes it does not.

To have games/toys available for learning through a loaning system can benefit all minority groups including bilingual, culturally deprived, academically and physically handicapped and the slow developer.

LEARNING GAMES LIBRARY -- THE PILOT PROJECT

The concept of a learning games library originated when two teachers were discussing the needs of a particular child. "If only we could offer parents materials and workshops prior to the time their child enters school." Expressed as a wish, it became a reality in 1976 when the first LGL was established in an Oak Park, Illinois library.

Basically what this LGL, pilot project for the State, provides, is:

a. special education personnel of the schools and others in the community, working together with the public library staff. From an organizational standpoint, the following occurs: Chapter 557 of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides funds, leadership, publicity and professional advice for selection of the materials. The local public library provides space, administration, maintenance and servicing. This has worked superbly well in Oak Park where the staff has been supportive in all regards.

b. The Oak Park library has a collection of developmental learning games for children, selected especially for those who may have learning problems. These materials are used by parents of high risk infants, toddlers and primary age children. It would be desirable to have them available for older children as well, who have difficulties with basic learning skills but who could learn from a game format -- a positive approach to their learning.

c. We feel that parents/caregivers in our communities have access to a wider variety of materials than could be afforded by one family. Parents have available to them a network of persons, whether their child has been identified with learning problems or not. Volunteers of the Council for Exceptional Children are available to assist in selection of materials. A catalog of materials is in the library at all times and can be utilized in the selection of games/toys. Prescription forms are available to teachers on which they can select those items best suited for the child at a particular time. During parent conference time and just prior to summer vacation time these forms are especially used.

The Oak Park LGL offers its materials for use by the West Suburban Special Recreation Association so that a play therapist from their department can meet with a parent at the library and work together in selection of appropriate materials for a child.

In addition, the materials are now available to stroke victims or other persons with nerve damage who have prescribed for them the use of toys for at-home use in the rehabilitation process. Prior to this time, toys have been purchased by such victims for use on a short term basis at the recommendation of a hospital specialist.

The pilot project is presently networking with other agencies serving special needs children in the community. These agencies include a college,

a hospital, a special recreation association, Easter Seal and other special agencies. The plan is to provide one brochure which will describe all special services in the community. Also, a drop-in center provides a collection of materials available to parents through workshops, where they can learn how to use those materials best with their child. Parents are then being directed to the LGL nearest them geographically.

WHY IN A PUBLIC LIBRARY?

Perhaps you are already convinced that a public library is a good location for a LGL. If not, permit me to share further information. Public libraries are an ideal location for a lending system of LGLs because they are:

1. highly accessible to the public,
2. they have an established lending system,
3. they have personnel trained in meeting the public,
4. their hours are such that working parents can utilize the service during evenings, weekends and the summer months in addition to daytime hours if those times are most convenient.

LEARNING GAMES LIBRARIES IN ILLINOIS

A learning games libraries committee was established in August, 1980. At first it was a joint committee of the Illinois Library Association, Children's Section and the ICEC. This proved successful. There were limitations to what we could do, however, especially in relation to soliciting money for operational expenses.

While the purpose of the organization has not changed, it is now, as of November, 1984, a separate organization, incorporated with not-for-profit status. Its purpose as the LGLA is to promote and assist in the development of LGLs at a community level. It offers assistance in establishing and support

ing on-going operation of LGLs by providing printed materials to assist interested persons; a slide/tape show; help by phone or in person to those wishing help; meetings at the pilot project for viewing the collection and meeting to discuss questions persons might have. The LGLA also provides a networking system among established LGLs and opportunity for others to learn from them.

There are 13 LGLs in Illinois currently. While there are basic likenesses, community needs differ. LGLs have the following in common:

a. a collection of educational meterials is housed most often in a public library.

b. the collection is accessible and available to handicapped children and their caregivers as well as to all caregivers of the community.

c. when possible, trained professionals and other community resource persons with knowledge of special needs children are utilized in selection of materials.

d. publicity through newspapers, fliers, etc., is made to assure that parents/caregivers of special needs children are aware of the collection.

e. "Parent and child together" is reflected as a fundamental goal of the collection.

f. a system of parent inservices and other assistance, when possible, is made available by combined efforts of the library and other persons with understanding of special needs children.

g. the collection is free of charge to its users and available at hours convenient to working parents.

h. the library provides a systematic check-out procedure, sufficient process for circulation, record-keeping and repair of materials.

Individuality is apparent in the various locations throughout the State as to: check-out, length of borrowing time, specialization of materials, housing of materials and kinds of assistance given parents in selection of materials.

THE LEARNING MATERIALS CATALOG

Illinois Division for Early Childhood has taken a leadership role in revising and updating of the Learning Games Libraries Catalog. Lynn Moore, Early Childhood Consultant for the Illinois State Board of Education, member of the LGLA Directorship and past-president of the IDEC, was instrumental in getting the IDEC involved in the project in a major way. She obtained a grant from the Ray Graham Memorial Fund of ICEC which assisted in the printing of fliers disseminated throughout Illinois asking for suggestions for this catalog. Special educators, particularly members of the CEC Illinois Division for Early Childhood, contributed toward selection of these recommended materials.

Dennis Sykes, on the board of IDEC and the LGLA and Coordinator of the Resource Access Project, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, heads the joint IDEC and LGLA Catalog Committee. Many persons have assisted in the selection process and in the writing and refining of written information provided on catalog pages. Graphics have been done by students at the University of Illinois, Champaign, under the direction of Daniel Hampson, a commercial artist and member of the LGLA Directorship.

Having taken almost three years, the project is to be completed by February 1, 1986. Approximately 300 materials are included. Placed on computer, the plan is to revise and update on an annual basis.

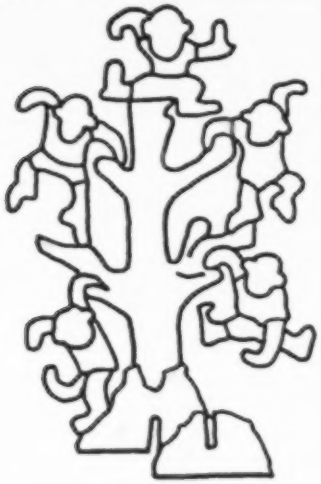
Each catalog page provides:

title of game/toy/puzzle
suggested developmental and interest levels
description of item and graphic
suggested uses -- helps for parents and educators
source and price range
skills taught through play experience.

A sample catalog page and listing of skills areas used in the catalog follow:

WOODEN JIG-SAW PUZZLE: MONKEY TREE

Suggested Developmental Level 3-6 Suggested Interest Level 3-6



Brief Description:

Wooden jig-saw puuzzle of monkeys in the playboard makes a stand-up scene

Suggested Uses:

1. Before removing parts from the puzzle board, discuss what the child sees in the puzzle. Ask them how they think the pieces can be used.
2. Encourage child to put puzzle parts back in their places on the puzzle board each time they finish playing.
3. Talk about the colors of the objects.
4. Ask the child to set up the parts of the puzzle (assist, if necessary). Encourage imaginary play.
5. While playing, talk to child about a monkey "on the tree,""under," "at the top," "by the side."

Manufacturer Simplex

Price Range 10-20

Skills:
Fine Motor: hand-eye coordination, pincer grip
Social Emotional: imaginary play
Communication: labeling

SKILL AREAS

VISUAL SKILLS (Looking Activities)

- visual awareness
- visual discrimination
- visual matching
- visual tracking
- visual sequencing
- visual memory

AUDITORY SKILLS (Hearing Activities)

- sound awareness
- auditory discrimination
- auditory sequencing
- auditory memory

TACTILE SKILLS (Feeling Activities)

- feeling
- tactile stimulation
- tactile awareness
- tactile discrimination

COMMUNICATION SKILLS (communicating Activities)

- sound play
- imitating sounds
- following directions
- labeling
- sentence structure
- talking with meaning

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS (Big Muscle Activities)

- locomotion
- balance
- motor planning
- body awareness

FINE MOTOR SKILLS (Small Muscle Activities)

- whole hand grip
- hand eye coordination
- pincer grip (small finger activity)
- bilateral activities
- dexterity
- directionality

COGNITIVE (Thinking Activities)

- shape concept
- size
- weight
- color
- form
- depth
- sequence (seriation)
- classification
- cause effect

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS

- solitary play
- parallel play
- group play
- imitative play
- imaginary play

LIFE SKILLS

- self help
- environmental awareness

MATHEMATICS SKILLS

- math readiness
- word problems
- consumer math

READING SKILLS

- reading readiness
- reading comprehension

In selection of materials for the catalog, the following safety and practical aspects were taken into consideration:

Materials are durable and not easily broken.

Surfaces of materials can be easily cleaned.

Edges of materials are rounded not sharp; there are no pieces small enough to swallow. (Precautions as to developmental level or requisites of the young child in playing with specific materials are listed on catalog pages where appropriate).

Articles are made of non-flammable materials.

Materials are non-toxic; paint is non-poisonous.

Materials are of a size that can be carried easily.

Games/toys are attractive for the young child.

Materials encourage imaginative play.

Games/toys provide opportunity for a high rate of success in relation to the child's developmental stage.

HOW IS A PARENT TO KNOW WHAT TO SELECT IN THE WAY OF MATERIALS?

We strongly encourage teacher and parent to join forces in selecting appropriate materials for a child. A special education or regular classroom teacher can use a "prescription" form. Items recommended can be checked on the form which the parent can then take to the library. We suggest to teachers that a starting point in using the materials is a success level for the child. Begin in an area where you know the child will have a positive experience. After a period of time, move to a deficit area, starting at an easy level for the child.

Some LGLs provide a listing of main categories which teachers use as a general guide in recommendation of materials to the parent. One provides an annotated listing of the materials to guide teachers and parents in making choices. The Oak Park Pilot Project offers a listing of some of the materials on a brochure together with location and hours of the library (see sample following).

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___ Mix'N Match Puzzles, 18-19
___ Three Little Pigs (game), 18-26
___ Wipe-Off Design Copying, 18-27
___ Prereading and Premath Tutor, 18-29
___ Visual Discrimination Flip Books, 18-33

___ What's Missing, 18-2
___ What Goes Together Wipe-Off Cards, 18-3
___ Sequencing Pictures Mark-On, Wipe-Off, 18-13
___ Classification of Objects Concept Cards, 18-15
___ Mix and Match Puzzle, 18-32
___ Dinosaur Mazes, 18-34

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

___ Flannel Board Aid-Seasons, 21-13

___ Singulars and Plurals Picture Cards, 21-5
___ Animal Puppets and Tapes, 21-5.1
___ Story Builder: Plus and Minus, 21-7
___ Flannel Board Aid - Opposite Concepts, 21-8
___ Flannel Board Aid - We Dress for Weather, 21-11
___ Flannel Board Aid - My Face and My Body, 21-12
___ Categories, Food and Animals, 21-20
___ Categories, Clothing/Household Items, 21-21
___ Form-A-Sound, 21-27
___ Colored Dominoes For The Hearing Impaired, 21-28
___ Fingerplay Puzzle Using Sign Language Symbols, 21-29

LANGUAGE ARTS AND READING SKILLS

___ Sound Puzzles, 28-14

___ ALPHA-Match (Capital/lower case letter forms), 28-1
___ Sound Off (initial consonant sounds), 28-2
___ Alphabet Motor Activities, 28-11
___ Sound Puzzle: Final Sounds, 28-19

___ Boo (final consonant sounds), 28-3
___ Digraph Whirl (initial consonants), 28-5
___ Road Race (initial consonant blends), 28-6
___ Lucky Duck (short vowel sounds), 28-7
___ Spin Out (long vowel sounds), 28-8
___ Cover-Up (long and short vowel sounds), 28-9
___ Bone Zone (long vowel sounds and patterns), 28-10
___ Turn-a-Word, 28-13
___ Letter and Number Wheel, 28-15
___ Short Vowel Tic Tac Toe, 28-18

TACTILE AWARENESS

___ Touch- and-Match Textures (Set 2), 31-1
___ Tactile Block Set, 14-156

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LEARNING GAMES LIBRARY

FOR ALL CHILDREN
Ages 2 - 8

ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO MAY HAVE LEARNING PROBLEMS

500 LEARNING GAMES TO BE USED BY PARENTS WITH THEIR CHILDREN TO AID CHILDREN IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF:

- NUMBER AWARENESS & MATH SKILLS
- AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION
- VISUAL PERCEPTION & MOTOR SKILLS
- READING READINESS
- SPEECH & LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
- LANGUAGE ARTS & READING SKILLS
- TACTILE AWARENESSS

LOCATION:

MAZE BRANCH LIBRARY
845 South Gunderson Ave.
Oak Park, 60304
PHONE: 386-4751

HOURS:

Monday	1 - 9 P.M.
Tuesday	9 - 9 P.M.
Wednesday	9 - 9 P.M.
Thursday	1 - 9 P.M.
Friday	9 - 5 P.M.
Saturday	9 - 5 P.M. (Closed Saturdays during the Summer)
Sunday	1 - 5 P.M. (Open Sundays during the Summer)

..ADULTS WITH SUBURBAN LIBRARY SYSTEM CARDS OR CICERO PUBLIC LIBRARY CARDS MAY BORROW GAMES FOR A PERIOD OF THREE WEEKS...

PRESCRIPTION FOR LEARNING

The following is a representative listing of materials available at the Maze Branch of the Oak Park Public Library. The developmental learning materials are available to parents on three week loan.

Teachers, you are welcome to use the checklist, as a suggestion to parents, of materials they may wish to use at home with their child. We suggest that you check more than one item in a particular area in order to increase the likelihood of the parent finding suggested materials in when they visit the collections.

Materials are listed in order of difficulty, i.e., easier materials are listed first.

NUMBER AWARENESS

___ Counting Picture Cards, 10-1
___ Numerals and Counting Shapes, 10-12
___ Beaded Number Cards, 10-15
___ Number Readiness Posters, 10-16
___ Follow the Dots (Mark on, Wipe off), 10-17
___ Number Matching (Object to Object), 10-19
___ Locking Numbers (Puzzle pieces), 10-22
___ Count From 1 to 24 Match-Ups, 10-23
___ Primary Balance Scale, 10-31

___ Jumbo Domino Set, 10-18
___ Number Puzzles, Level 2, 10-28
___ Mix & Match Puzzle (Number Concepts 1-25), 10-29

___ Value Boats, Cards and Number Stair including Math Cubes,10-17
___ Equivalence Pattern Boards and Number Cards including Math Cubes, 10-7
___ Number Equalizer Balance, 10-10
___ Sets & Symbols Games, 10-32
___ Numberland Counting Game, 10-35

AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION

___ Familiar Sounds - Cassette & Cards, 11-1
___ Sound Picture Match-Up, 11-9

___ Shake & Match Sounds, 11-3
___ Buzzer Board & Pattern Cards, 11-5
___ Sound Lotto (Cassette & Boards), 11-8

VISUAL PERCEPTION & FINE MOTOR SKILLS

___ Lacing Cards, 14-5
___ Shapes Sorting Box, 14-12
___ Same or Different Color Cards, 14-27
___ Easy Grip Pegs and Board, 14-49
___ Fruit and Animal Puzzles, 14-73
Level A
Level B
Level C
___ Great Shapes (Circles, Triangles, etc.), 14-122

___ Pegboard, 14-9
___ Association Picture Cards II, 14-21
___ Same or Different Size Cards, 14-29
___ Double Handed Scissors, Left Handed, 14-41
___ Double Handed Scissors, Right Handed, 14-43
___ What's Missing (cards), 14-52
___ Graduated Colored Cylinders, 14-130
___ Large Body Puzzle - Black Girl, 14-135

___ Peg Board - three pieces, 14-9
___ Association Picture Cards III, 14-13
___ Visual Memory Cards, Levels I & II, 14-15 & 14-16
___ Association Picture Cards I, 14-19
___ Sequential Picture Cards I, 14-23
___ Color, Object, Number, Grouping Cards, 14-31
___ Halves to Wholes Cards, 14-33
___ Sequential Picture Cards III, 14-56
___ Eye-Hand Integration Exercises, 14-60
___ Colored Inch Cubes & Designs, 14-65
___ Look Alikes, 14-72
___ Face and Figure Puzzles, 14-75
___ Position Pairs, 14-118
___ Attribute Games, 14-131
___ Car Match-Ups, 14-142
___ Tactile Block Set, 14-156
___ Match-Ups, People and Their Jobs, 14-158
___ Beginning Mosaics and Pattern Cards, 14-222
___ Create-a-Path Rollerway, 14-229
___ Peg-N-Lace Board Set, 14-236

READING READINESS

___ Beaded Alphabet, 18-1
___ Mark-On, Wipe-Off Tracing Shapes, 18-12
___ Mark-On, Wipe-Off Look Alikes, 18-14
___ Pick-Pairs, 18-23
___ Color Matching Puzzle, 18-31

___ Touch To Learn, 18-6
___ Color and Shape Bingo, 18-17

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Now in process by the LGLA are:

1. revision of the slide/tape show, "Learning Together Through Play."
2. a complete listing of sources of materials included in the catalog using a grid format.
3. a kit which is being revised and expanded to incorporate many kinds of practical information relating to games/toys as well as practical information of persons establishing or maintaining a LGL.

CONCLUSION

Game and toy libraries are rapidly increasing in number. This may be attributed to several factors. First, there are increasing numbers of early childhood programs and studies directed toward children from birth through age five. Monies are being provided at the state level for many of these programs. Both prevention of disabilities and the remediation of handicaps are parts of these programs. We can only hope this emphasis does not end at age five. Secondly, the benefits of parents as a part of the motivation and learning schema for not only handicapped but for all children, is being substantiated in research. Another factor encouraging the increasing numbers of game and toy libraries is the financial saving which results from involvement of parents in early intervention programs.

Learning Games Libraries, a community sponsored project, offer not only materials but professional help to the parent/caregiver through special education personnel who may offer services as a part of their conferencing with parents and/or through such professional help being offered on-site at a library location or other center where learning games are housed.

Game/toy libraries are a movement which is growing; there is a need for them. Perhaps you can find a way to provide developmental learning materials to the children of your community. Crossing boundaries in creating paths for parent and child -- Learning Games Libraries do this.

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